

Executive Registry

76-1354

5 March 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Courtesy Call on the DCI by [REDACTED]
4 March 1976, 5:15-5:45 p.m.

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1. The Director greeted me most cordially, and we exchanged some chit-chat on the oil business for a few minutes. He then inquired about what I had to suggest about operating an intelligence organization. I replied that my experience did not permit me to be much help to him, as my activities have been confined largely to the Board of National Estimates. I outlined my rather peculiar "consulting" arrangements. Having had to decline an invitation to become a member of the Board, it was arranged that I would consult whenever the Chairman felt I had some special expertise to contribute, and that further I would be welcome to spend as much time as I thought I could spare with the Board. As a result, I tried to spend at least a week every six weeks with ONE and so kept generally current with the NIE's as they were produced.

2. He remarked that, as he was receiving a great deal of advice on how National Intelligence Estimates should be produced and used, he would be grateful for any ideas I might have. I told him that I thought the basic concept of an independent board consisting of individuals who amongst them had some depth of expertise in most of the areas covered by the estimates, but who were also good generalists, contributed greatly to a balanced product. The absence of administrative responsibilities, of requirements to produce and defend budgets, and to justify or defend policies removed some of the barriers to independence of judgment beyond those which exist in the prejudices and preferences that most individuals inevitably possess. I was in no position to judge the effectiveness of the present NIO system; I was familiar with the NIO job description which seemed to me to make very great demands upon the individual NIO's. I was ready to say that, if the NIO's all possess not only specialist expertise but a broad catholicity of interests, then it probably worked very well. But it seemed to me that this system required a very high level of competence in the NIO's who, even at their best, might miss inputs that would come from specialists in other areas routinely through a group such as the Board of National Estimates. Illustratively a specialist preparing a paper [REDACTED] would no doubt immediately

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consult with OER on Persian Gulf oil and gas because of the great requirements of [] for a continuous supply of energy from the Gulf. But he would not necessarily consult with someone who also had expertise in political matters in the Gulf which might well affect the [] estimate but which would not necessarily be supplied by OER. As illustrative of the kind of generalist I was speaking about, I remarked that I did not remember a single NIE in which [] had participated, on topics from Soviet weaponry to the price of oil, to which he had not contributed something valuable. This is the general gist of our conversation, which was being actively pursued by the Director until someone reminded him that he had another appointment.

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3. I did make explicit that I had no particular brief for the organization or the position of the old Office of National Estimates, and I was sure that some of the former members of the Office had valuable ideas on how the performance could have been improved and how its product could have been more profitably used.

4. I regret that I did not add that it seemed to me that the absence of some mechanism such as the ONE must be a heavy burden on the DCI or his Deputy to supply the generalist input, which in my judgment ought always be to review the work of specialists, no matter how competent they may be in their specialty.

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